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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

December 15, 2003

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ROBERT S. RANGEL, STAFF DIRECTOR

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Yesterday was a great day for the Iraqi people and for all the men and women who so ably and proudly serve our nation. While our mission in Iraq is far from complete and there will be many hard days ahead for our forces, our servicemen and women again demonstrated this weekend why they are the finest in the world.

As the administration and the Iraqi Governing Council turn to the next steps in dealing with Saddam Hussein, I believe it is critical that he be tried in Iraq by the recently created Iraqi Special Tribunal. The Iraqi people suffered longest and most directly under Saddam's despotic rule. During a recent trip to Iraq, I saw the mass graves near al Hillah where nearly 3,000 men, women, and children were slaughtered and I heard some of their stories. This was just one of hundreds of incidents inflicted upon the Iraqi people over decades of tyrannical rule.

Having the opportunity to try Saddam before the world will bolster the credibility and strength of the new Iraqi government. The law that establishes the Special Tribunal, while it provides for Iraqi judges, prosecutors, and defense lawyers, also draws heavily on international norms and provides for the ability to access international expertise and appoint international judges. This will ensure that an Iraqi trial has the support of the international community while putting the Iraqi people in the position of administering justice for the crimes committed against them.

I join you in celebrating this wonderful achievement and look forward to working with you on the next steps in helping to bring this tyrant to justice.

Sincerely,


Ike Skelton
Ranking Democrat

cc: Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld
Secretary of State Powell
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Myers